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News Release

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NCAA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CREATES PANEL TO STUDY BASEBALL BAT ISSUES

OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS---The NCAA Executive Committee has agreed to create a panel of independent experts to study risk and game integrity issues in college baseball and report on its findings no later than July 1, 1999.

In the meantime, the committee adopted the bat diameter and weight/length difference specifications for baseball bats to be used in the 1999 NCAA baseball championships. Those are two of the three requirements -- along with batted-ball exit speed -- slated to take effect for regular-season competition for the 1999-2000 academic year.

"Adoption of the two physical standards will retard the performance of certain nonwood bats in use last season," said NCAA President Cedric W. Dempsey. "So we are moving in the correct direction, and we're doing it sooner rather than later. That is significant."

Dempsey said the panel will involve experts, including individuals from inside and outside the Association's membership.

"We need to know that we have the most reliable information available for the Executive Committee so that we can determine if any modifications to our rule for the 2000 season need to be made," said Dempsey. "Frankly, we are learning more all the time about exit speeds, reaction times and the differences in so-called 'sweet spots' between wood and nonwood bats.

"Creation of this panel will give us the opportunity to tap the best experts we can find to analyze testing results and all other information we can gather," Dempsey said. "College baseball is a great sport and deserves this kind of attention."

Bats used in the 1999 championships in all three divisions will not exceed 2 5/8 inches in diameter, and the difference between length of the bat and weight (not including the grip) cannot exceed three units

(i.e., a 34-inch bat cannot weigh less than 31 ounces).

The Association has learned that at least one of the bat manufacturers will provide indemnification for schools with which it has contracts to provide bats.

The Executive Committee agreed last August to adopt these two specifications plus a batted-ball exit speed of 94 miles per hour (93 plus one mile per hour tolerance) for regular-season and championship competition, beginning in August 1999 if testing could be performed by then.

Dempsey said the panel will be asked to submit a report no later than July 1, 1999. The August 1998 specifications remain in place. The Executive Committee will review the recommendations of the panel, but Dempsey said the effective date of August 1, 1999, currently remains in place.

"There are a number of factors to consider," he said. "For example, we may discover that there should be a range of exit speeds depending on the weight/length attributes of a specific bat. There may be other issues we discover. That's an important reason to establish the panel."